A Picturesque Clubland for the Men and Women of the Stage

Distinctive Atmospheres Mark the Many Clubs of the Profession, and All Have Their Charms

Vaudeville Artists Rejoice in New Clubhouse Notable for Its Hotel-like Splendors

By WILLIS STEELL.

THE opening of a new clubhouse in this "clubby" town is not so infrequent as to cause ordinarily more than a transient ripple on the surface, but with the new National Vaudeville Artists Club at 229 West Forty-sixth street it was different. The clubhouse itself is an innovation, comprehending the usual features of such an institution and those of a very modern and handsome hotel. In fact if one is not paying dues there as a vaudevillian in good standing one would naturally assume that it was a hotel.

There is, of course, the customary Cerberus to be placated at the blind marble entrance to the imposing six story white stone building, but once having thrown him the bait and ascended the short flight of marble steps to the left you have in front of you an exact counterpart of a hotel desk and are immediately in what would be called a lobby in hotel speech, but is here called the men's lounge. Manager J. L. Hurlburt is likely to meet you there and point out the splendors of the spot, also to tell you there are already 12,000 members who have paid initiation fees and must pay dues, also that the place is a veritable club—a fact that is difficult to keep in mind.

The Foyer-Lobby-Lounge.

For the foyer-lobby-lounge is a two story square opening with white marble floor carpeted in dark red velvet, set about with davenports and chairs of dark blue velvet inviting to repose. Against the walls, which are done in blue gray, stand Florentine sodesta chairs in crimson damask, and crimson cushions absorb some of the blue of the upholstery. A carved oak table occupies the centre of the great space, holding apparently all the illustrated papers that are published in the world. Smaller tables furnished with smokers' implements are placed somewhat stiffly about. There is a gorgeous white marble mantel, flecked with gold with a "practical" fireplace and the portrait of George M. Cohan (the only picture in the room) inscribed with the "best continuous wishes" to E. F. Albee, for whose

In the writing room at the Green Room.

dream of a proper setting for the high lights of vaudeville this clubhouse is the fulfillment.

A smaller apartment but yet of a goodly size opens right off the men's lounge; it is the women's lounge in charge of Mrs. Brucker, and in its canary yellow walls and blue hangings and furniture it wears the smile of a dainty boudoir. Equal in size and of similar proportions is the ballroom back of the main lounge. This blazes in white and gold with a white marble stage arched in red damask and with a red damask drop curtain. A raised gallery opposite is set with a dozen dining tables, where it is likely real food and not the stage papier mache variety is on occasion served.

There is a mezzanine floor or gallery furnished with desks where the members find every convenience for the signing of contracts, and the clubhouse is provided with the most modern grill. Perhaps there is a bar also, but it seemed to be coy and retiring the other day.

He Sees Only One Danger.

One hundred and eight sleeping rooms are to be found on the upper stories, but all of them are not to be seen casually. In fact, the visitor was warned from one of them by a stalwart guardian in the club uniform of baby blue.

"Any danger?" asked the visitor.

"Ladies," replied the guardian ambiguously. And thus the guest learned that his function was to preserve a scientific frontier between the sexes. They meet, however, on equal rights in the lounge, where, indeed, the ladies seem to set the octave for the human voice.

It was noticeable that the tradition of a shrill vaudeville voice had no justification down there; everybody spoke in a low tone or a whisper; perhaps the place is so very new and shining that the feeling of awe it inspires has not yet been dissipated. A vaudeville agent doing business with a fair star of that stage said in a Jerome K. Jerome whisper:

"Lissen! you keep them contracks by you and don't you do nothin' till 5:30 this afternoon, when you hear from me. Lissen!"

And the blond star whispered back: "You can count on me straight; I won't do nothin' for nobody till I hear from you, but if you don't ring by 5:30 I sign. Understand?"

Atmosphere, that indescribable thing which is more marked by not being found in a place than by its presence (ever intangible), cannot be purchased from the interior decorator, and when it finds, as it doubtless will, an extremely comfortable home in the new National Vaudeville Artists Club, that building will lose its present look of a very up to date hotel and assume the aspect of the home its founders would like it to be. Never may it hope to have the atmosphere as thick as the modest little Green Room Club, only a block distant. Near each other as they are, the two clubs will always be as far apart as America itself is from Europe.

The Green Room Club.

Except for the false front of brick which the Green Room turns to a street busy with theatrical wigmakers and costumers, this club has no point of contact with its neighbors. When the club under its first prompter, William A. Brady, moved from temporary quarters into this old fashioned New York dwelling it did not call in an architect to make structural changes; the basement of the house became forthwith office and grill, the parlor and dining room on the second floor simply called themselves lounge and library, perhaps the partitions of bedrooms were torn out on the third floor to give space to the billiard tables and like small changes were made on the top story to make a space for the Actors' Order of Friendship to hold meetings in; the club moved in, that was all, in 1902, but at once that intangible atmosphere moved in too and filled every corner and cranny.

The least perceiving guest even if he were blindfolded and admitted through the skylight would know as soon as his bandages were removed that he was in a club where actors ruled and made merry as well as reputations and talked and talked and talked about themselves. Old books behind the library glass, old pictures on the walls, old playbills, attest the same conclusion. And speaking of old playbills, the maddening habit of framing them without the year date may be in a disorderly way mentioned here. It is interesting to read that Charlotte Cushman played a famous role in June, but what June? And the framed square of silver cloth bound all round with fringe of bullion which informs us that Edwin Booth played *Richelieu* with Bella Pateman as *Julie* and Eben Plympton making his first appearance in London at the Adelphi on July 20 would be more satisfactory to consult if the season were scribbled on in pencil.

The Club Flourishes.

But this is a fly in the ointment; the Green Room otherwise is perfectly what it should be. Forrest, Booth, McCullough, Barrett, Jefferson, Modjeska, Ada Rehan and innumerable others whose voices are not preserved in the talking machine look out from the walls which have grown old and brown and dusty as if to compose a proper background. George Clarke, the amiable cicerone, points out that new pictures are constantly being added to the already vast collection, and draws attention to the memorial tablet to the second prompter of the club, Horace Cooley, lately deceased, which has been placed on the wall of the lounge.

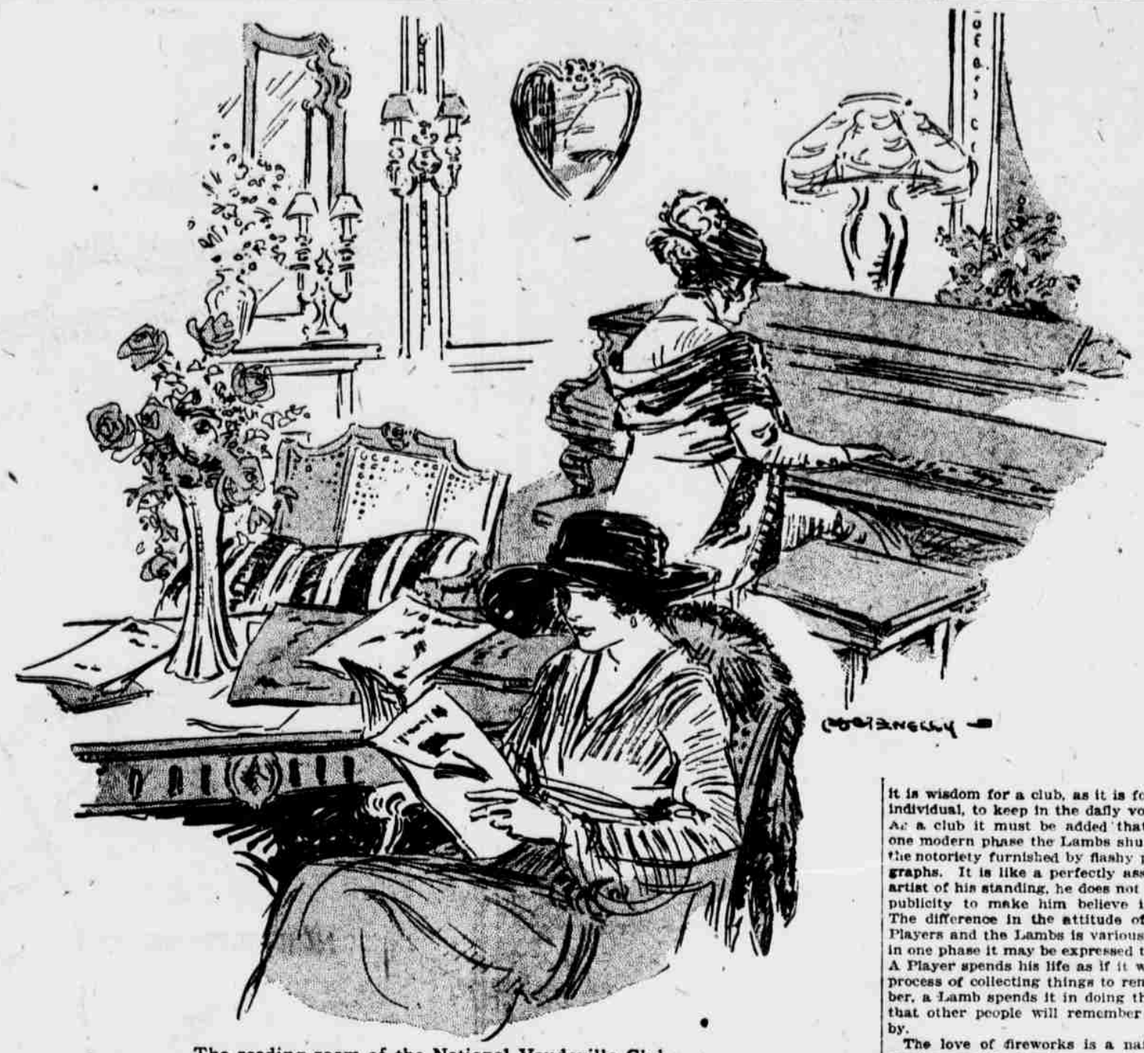
Edwards Davis, eighth in succession, is now the club prompter. The membership could be largely increased if it were thought advisable by him and the trustees and supers and the club is flourishing. It is affiliated with the Eccentric Club of London and in historical and professional atmosphere it is able to give that famous association a run for popularity. Perhaps it exceeds its London counterpart for one doesn't expect to find in the Green Room what is there and it is a shock of contrast one experiences on coming in from the busy street; it is the flash of surprise that pleases and cuts out any idea of criticism.

There's nothing brilliant about the Green Room (except the members), nothing splendid, no gold or even tinsel; everything, including the furniture, is old and friendly. Under the soft, warm touch of time old walnut and oak, faded pictures, dusty hangings, blend together with artistic interstices; it is the true platonic touch enriching everything.

The Friars Club.

If these words weight too much when in the scale is a small building which for its present uses counts but seventeen years, what shall we say of the Friars Club, its big brother but a block away? Only that even a greater effect of age and warmth that usually comes but with years has been attained therein and by the use of no meretricious means.

The great banqueting hall of the Friars carries in its fine proportions and simple but massive decorations something of the air of the Guildhall of London. This room, like its prototype, is too big for more than occasional use and the club wisely has decided to valance off that portion between the great portal and the



The reading room of the National Vaudeville Club.

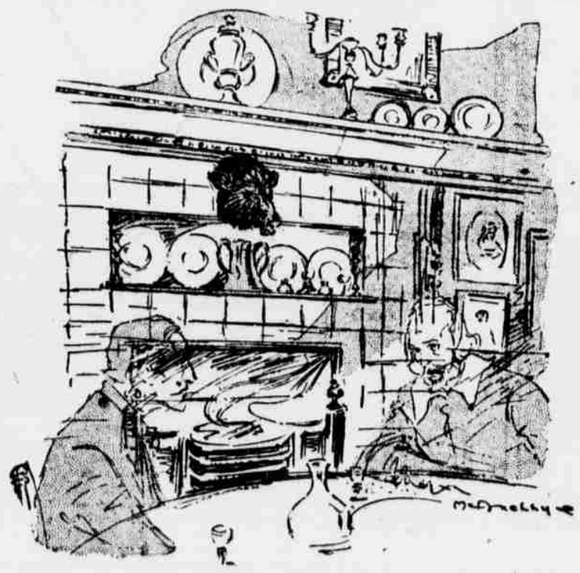
Forty-eighth street windows and fit it up for a lounge. The expense of this change, now making, will be $15,000, but this amount was instantly subscribed by the members and the club is safeguarded against debt.

The Friars Club has one of the largest theatrical club buildings in the city, but it is not too large and all of it is in daily use by members with the exception noted. The grill on the first floor is a magnificent apartment with nothing in its embellishment that would shock a true friar of the middle ages as unwonted. Its fireplace is a distinctive feature, but so are the deeply mullioned windows, the refectory tables and the cosier tables for dining *a trois* or *a quatre*.

Perhaps the middle age friar would not understand why the room is so continuously occupied and there may be other things about this modern adaptation that would puzzle the antique religious man. In this constant activity of eating and drinking the Friars is not different from other theatrical clubs. Serving begins there quite early in the morning and keeps on till quite early in the morning. Since the "boys have come back" these eating hours have been even extended; the Friars, without boasting a superior patriotism, have been loyal friends of the soldiers and scarcely a night passes now without seeing half a hundred or more of the wounded men as guests of the club at dinner, at the play and for supper afterward. The large dinners tendered to groups of soldiers in the banquet hall could not, of course, however averse are the Friars to publicity, be kept out of the newspapers. These were in the nature of public events.

Only three years ago the Friars took possession of their building, the first president or abbot being Channing Pollock, a playwright remembered for two words he wrote for Grace George, "Romeo did," as well as for other later and longer but no more pungent stage speech. Wells Hawkes, now Lieut. Hawkes, succeeded Pollock, to be followed in turn by Charles Emerson Cook, John W. Rumsey and the present incumbent, George M. Cohan. Other officers are John J. Gleason, J. Frank Stephens, D. Frank Dodge, and on the board of governors are Irving Berlin, Eugene Walter John Pollock, William Morris and Fred Block.

A complete modern gymnasium is to be found on the top floor of the club, with handball and squash courts; below is the floor given up to sleeping rooms, each with its private bathroom, and below them the board of governors room and the splendid library.



Before the fireplace in the Players, a modern and a ghost.

On the walls of these rooms and in the corridors is a wealth of pictures, original drawings, paintings and the like. The originals of the programmes and posters designed for the various frolics are hung in the governors room, where is to be seen also a painting of J. P. Kemble as *Coriolanus*, left to the club by the will of "Diamond Jim" Brady. The theatrical library of the club is said to be the largest and most valuable in New York.

With the Players.

This city, New York, might be divided roughly into men "clubbed" and "unclubbed," but the latter, it should seem, are much in the minority. To judge by their number and prosperity it must give a man a standing to be a member of one of these clubs, and yet individuals of the minority say that it gives them a standing not to be a member. If you are left out in the cold you loudly pity those within who are asphyxiated in the heat, and if you have a cosey chair by the fireside of the Players you can afford to fall asleep and say nothing. This most famous of all New York's theatrical clubs surely does offer the choice of the softest and cosiest settees and chairs.

The Players is the home also of the artistic temperament; or better, its breeding place. The passive mind entering there as a member soon ceases to receive merely, and longs to become active on the creative side. The results are not always happy, for members find that it is possible to be susceptible to artistic influences while dowered with no faculty of origination. Actors, poets, musicians and painters are in the majority of the names of the Players, but there are a good many members also who may be summed up as "artistic persons" to whom the artist appeals. Between these two stands the interpreter, and as in this actors' club he is legion the club has never lost, despite the admixture of business man and lawyer, its theatrical purpose. The Players, founded and endowed by the great Booth, is still a club of players.

Talked, written, printed about, sketched and painted, the Players, long before John Drew, its present president, took office, was the best known club in America. Nevertheless its charm is recognized but superficially, and it is doubtful if the potency of the rich surroundings is known at all. This power is exerted toward the making of artists, and while it must fail, as every earthly influence does in numberless instances, still it can never fail to sophisticate its members.

What can be more delightful than to possess good esthetic faculties, to be able to know good art as expressed in prints and pictures, to be able to enjoy good books, music, plays? Such a power is the extra octave in life's gamut. The appreciative member of the Players is the idle heir to everything fine; he's the bee sucking away at every flower and never asked to make honey. Poets sing for him, painters paint, composers write. He is in and of them all, but he needn't do any of them himself. The outsider may be content with ordinary self-consciousness, but the member, unless he is distinctly out of place, seeks after over-consciousness, and in the Players it is there for the seeking with the joy and the curse that go with it.

The Aggressive Lambs.

Beside its restless, striving, modern rival the Lambs, this club on Gramercy is moss grown; it swims languidly in a back water. The Lambs, so incongruously named, are an aggressive lot. They swim in every sea and no wave of modernity is too high for them to breast.

Go there at the luncheon hour and note how it has been necessary to spread tables in every corner while the original eating place is completely submerged. Note also who the feeders are. You will see as many men of business as actors, as many editors as men of business, while the advertising world is as largely represented as by the Rotary Club. The talk too is of the "street," of market prices, of society gossip, of everything, in short, but the stage. That there are actors in the membership of the Lambs everybody acquainted with their roster of famous stage names well knows, but they are not one ideaed actors, they know the world in front as well as behind the footlights, and the traditional tragedian who hauls out the Kankakee *Gazette* to prove what a hit he made there is as laughable a figure in this clubhouse as he is in the world at large.

Strange indeed would it be if in moving to their new home built for them the Lambs had not carried with their penates many a valuable relic, picture, play bill, et al., valuable from historical and other associations. They are here, but it is somewhat difficult to find them, for the club has really outgrown its quarters and nobody would be surprised to hear that it was planning to erect new ones. For the Lambs is a constantly growing organization; it is by odds the most popular theatrical club in this country, and its fame due to the fame of its members and to their gambols has gone beyond the confines of these widespread States.

In the Daily Vortex.

Such popularity, achieved naturally and easily, carries with it a defect, and that is noticeable in the somewhat cavalier spirit of members toward these objects of stage history. Why, it may be asked, pay inordinate attention to past things, even to the past greatness of actors, when we are constantly engaged in making history for those who are to come? And, in fact, the Lambs are so up to date, even ahead of their era, that "panting time toils after them in vain."

There is a library connected with the club, and the floor of the club building where it is situated is the quietest within its walls, far quieter than the theatre hall, where there is apt to be a demure rehearsal going on, or at the least some composer of the one finger variety trying out his latest syncopated composition. The books in the library are valuable as reference and will one day rival in interest the collections made by rival clubs; they suffer as its other possessions do which are not required by the daily stint and are permitted to repose honorably, but their value is accorded. Newspapers and journals from everywhere in the world, whether their scope is theatrical or otherwise, are apt to engross the club's readers.

This is not uttered in the way of criticism, but as comment. In truth, it is wisdom for a club, as it is for an individual, to keep in the daily vortex. As a club it must be added that the one modern phase the Lambs shuns is the notoriety furnished by flashy paragraphs. It is like a perfectly assured artist of his standing, he does not need publicity to make him believe in it. The difference in the attitude of the Players and the Lambs is various, but in one phase it may be expressed thus: A Player spends his life as if it was a process of collecting things to remember, a Lamb spends it in doing things that other people will remember him by.

The love of fireworks is a natural passion, and the Lambs are quite human; they realize that at wide intervals it is essential to show up brilliantly in order to prove that wit scintillates as freely there to-day as in the lamented shepherdship of Digby Bell. It is the reverse of wisdom to be witty always; actor, like writer, who constantly scintillates puts out his own light. To do so at the right moment and as a surprise or shock is what tickles. Hence the gambols.

In the incongruous elements of this club which flow side by side but do not really mingle, half the members do not know how the other half plays. In less cryptic phrase there are old members of the Lambs who haven't been to the theatre in years and whose interest in the drama died with Booth. They have other interests in common with their fellows who are actors, and these are broad enough to warrant sympathy.

It is because so many callings are represented in the club that it is thoroughly cosmopolitan, and this all round character widens its popularity. The greatest force in a club, as it is in any other association of men, is the vis inertia and perhaps the real independence of a Lamb is begotten from his lack of jealousy of a Friar or a Player and his ability to live up to the French expression "Je ne suis pas egoiste." In other words he is satisfied with himself and his club, but he does not brag about either one.

Smaller clubs not vitally theatrical but strongly interested in the drama have grown up since the Players and the Lambs were launched. They are the Abbey, the Twelfth Night (a women's theatrical club), the Grolier, although the latter collects rare editions of plays as it does of books and would be surprised to think it touched in any vital way on the player's career. With the spread of little theatres, little clubs or associations of players sprung up over the country, some of which have lasted longer than the impulse that gave them birth. In nearly all of these as they have been established in New York the element of the picturesque has been more or less judiciously cultivated. It is against tradition and even reason to image a theatrical club, big or little, which would have a chance to live unless the spectacular, from a mild to a grotesque form, entered into its setting.

The library at the Friars.

J. L. Garvin Talks of Peace

The following interview with J. L. Garvin, the noted English editor, contains the expression of a sentiment that has considerable vogue in England. While THE SUN does not subscribe to that sentiment, it is presented, nevertheless, as the view of a considerable number of people in Great Britain.

"THERE shall be no war."

This new commandment has been suggested by J. L. Garvin, editor of the London *Sunday Observer*, as the new spirit animating the various peoples of the world who are now in the throes of building up a new international relationship. One of the greatest and undoubtedly the most exhaustive works on international relations following the war and the new era of world sympathy has just been published by Mr. Garvin under the title of "The Economic Foundations of Peace."

A world partnership is a truer basis for the League of Nations is the idea that Mr. Garvin works out in this truly admirable new book. The work is of the utmost importance to every thinking American, and after reading it he will undoubtedly be interested in the unusual personality of the writer, whose understanding of America and American affairs is more far-reaching than that of almost any other Englishman.

Speaks of America.

"America is undoubtedly bound up in the new area of world partnership," said Mr. Garvin in an interview with THE SUN correspondent. "Every nation in the world has lost its former self-sufficient basis, and in a multitude of ways, through the shortening of distances, better means of communication and increased trade relations, all portions of the world have been brought together and must now work in partnership toward the great end.

"Air power has broken down the isolation of every part of the world, just as the first American transcontinental railway brought the States together. At the beginning of the American Revolution and during the eight years following its conclusion the thirteen original States faced similar conditions to those now being faced by world Powers. It was realized at the time the thirteen States must be inseparably bound together or break to pieces, and in working out successfully those early day problems the United States has handed down to us invaluable lessons which we may easily apply to the present day. The States began fighting with one object in view—their independence—but at the conclusion of their fighting they found themselves facing an even greater problem, and it is the same to-day.

"Before my boy who was killed went to war we decided in long talks that it was the duty of the Allies to crush the worst in Germany. I am perfectly fair with Germany, and have treated in my books the subject of her restitution to a full share in the world partnership fully and fairly. But in fighting during the last four years we have gone beyond our original problem and now face something greater.

For an Enduring Peace.

"The English speaking leadership, the constructive vision, must bring about an enduring peace which must mean a departure from precedent. The narrowing of the Atlantic to a point where England is only eighteen hours from the United States is just one example of how closely various nations may be brought together, and in working out our problems to-day we come face to face with the question of either going ahead in the old way of war or taking the new way of working together in full partnership. We must have a full league for economic partnership as well as political association."

It is impossible to overemphasize Mr. Garvin's tremendous desire that America should break down her isolation and take her part in world affairs. For this end he suggests that the United States become the warder of the Middle East, and he holds this is one of the world's best hopes. He would have the United States take over the mandate for Armenia, and otherwise use her influence in upbuilding a real civilization in a backward part of the world. He visualizes a great system of air navigation with Cairo as the centre of the world.

Traffic and Treaties.

"Traffic is stronger than treaties," said Mr. Garvin. "And it is just as Daniel Webster said repeatedly in the early history of America: 'Commerce, commerce, commerce.' And if we proceed to a world partnership we inevitably shall have equal maritime competition with its close binding ties, both political and economic. A working agreement between England and America is the first necessity of this world partnership. The two countries must understand each other better.

"Britain is poorer but prouder. She is proud that, without thought of reward, she has given her treasure for a great cause. On the other hand the United States has not suffered seriously in a financial way. We have gained only half a victory, which is all that is possible on the battlefield, therefore Britain and America must work together to gain the other half. Let us foster mutual good will by making it profitable to all under a rational system of human brotherhood."

Although he attacks from several different angles the covenant of the League of Nations, Mr. Garvin bases his whole hope for the future upon the success of the league idea. He declared emphatically that the alternative to the league was a Bolshevized world and he dwelt at some length upon the rapidity with which Bolshevism is able to spread; its danger to western Europe, and to America, and the western continents.

"Ideas such as inspired by the Bolsheviki are not hampered by distance," says he. "The Atlantic Ocean is no longer a barrier to such things, because they seem to get their inspirations from the atmosphere—they simply fall from clear skies—and America to-day is clearly facing a crisis. If Americans shrink from this crowning effort for human unity and brotherhood the anti-climax would be a feast for cynics, one of the most discouraging blows ever dealt the best thing in modern politics. America's own soul is more concerned than that of any other land."

Favors a Supreme Council.

In outlining his ideas on the League of Nations, or, as he calls it, the world partnership, Mr. Garvin favors a supreme council made up of representatives chosen by the various nations of the world, which would be reenforced with an executive council or a general council of nations made up of elected delegates.

Beneath the executive council would come five separate sections: The high court of justice, a court of mediation, a secretariat, a mandatory commission and a supereme economic council. Working under the secretariat would be the treasury of the league, the office of records—a department to coordinate pre-war institutions—and a strategical branch to supervise armaments. Under the supreme economic council would be placed five departments: One to be known as the international financial council; the second to deal with the supply of raw materials; third, communication and traffic; fourth, a labor commission; fifth, an office of customs.